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News and Information

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REP. SMITH CALLS CONFERENCE A GREAT SUCCESS

INDIANAPOLIS—State Rep. Vernon G. Smith (D-Gary, IN) said the Seventh African-American Male National Conference (AAMNC), held in Indianapolis Oct. 26-28, was a tremendous success.

The conference, which attracted 566 people, had a theme of Education vs. Incarceration.

"The speakers were excellent," said Dr. Smith. "They were dynamic and everyone who heard them became charged. The young people who attended Friday's Youth Day were on fire. They said they felt empowered and ready to go back into their communities to talk with other youth and make a difference. The adults likewise were energized by the speakers and workshops. Everyone understood that the solution to incarceration is to be found in education. Along with the intellectual discussion, there was definitely a strong spiritual aspect to the conference that gave us the hope and confidence to succeed in this great and worthy mission. We all walked away Friday night with a renewed dedication and a commitment to our brothers who so desperately need our help.

"I would like to thank everyone who participated in the conference," continued Dr. Smith. "Each person helped create an atmosphere for positive change. Every one of us will take these ideas back to our home communities and work to implement them. Through education we can open the doors of opportunity and close the doors of prison so that African-Americans throughout the country can rise to the full and tremendous potential God has given each of us. We must believe, then achieve and we shall succeed in every aspect of American life."

The conference attracted top speakers from around the country, including Dr. Frederick (Freddie) Douglas Haynes III, pastor of Friendship-West Baptist Church in Dallas; Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu, president of African American Images; Dr. John H. Jackson, NAACP's national director of education; Dr. Julia Hare, PhD, San Francisco Black Think Tank's national executive director; Jeffrey I. Johnson, BET's "Cousin Jeff"; and the Rev. Alphonso Bailey of Down But Not Out Communications.

Twenty workshops were held during the conference. Dr. Smith said the interaction was dynamic and fruitful.

Next year, the 13th Indiana Commission on the Social Status of Black Males (ICSSBM) Conference will be held in late October. The AAMNC is held every other year.

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This release can be accessed on the Internet at www.IN.gov/H14

